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STATE FOR S/CT (FEIRSTEIN), NEA/ARP, EEB/ESC/IEC/EPC, PM/PPA
ENERGY FOR SENIOR FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR MOLLY WILLIAMSON,
SENIOR ADVISOR GETTO, AND DAS BRODMAN
OVP FOR KEVIN O'DONOVAN
NSC FOR ZARATE, JESSEE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2017

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SUBJECT: UAE AGREES IN PRINCIPLE TO VISIT BY USG ASSESSMENT TEAM ON CRITICAL ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON FOR REASONS 1.4 B & D.

¶1. (S) Summary: The commander of UAE's Critical National Infrastructure Force told Ambassador and visiting Department Senior Coordinator for Critical Energy Infrastructure Policy that he -- in principle -- welcomed a visit from a U.S. assessment team. He said that the UAE was creating a unified command to protect all critical infrastructure oil, gas, power and water, and that the UAE already had 1,600 people protecting these facilities. He is preparing a report for Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan by early April laying out his recommendations for improving facility security. End Summary.

¶2. (S) On March 20, Senior Coordinator for Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection Policy, Dr. Bruce Averill, Ambassador, and Econchief met with the UAE's Commander of the Critical National Infrastructure Force, Staff Colonel Sheikh Ahmed bin Tahnoun Al-Nahyan to discuss USG-UAE cooperation to protect the UAE's critical energy infrastructure. Sheikh Ahmed explained that he had been recently charged with creating a unified command dedicated to critical infrastructure protection, which includes power and desalinization plants as well as oil and gas facilities. He is in charge of both physical security and implementing procedures and policies for identification cards, etc. According to Sheikh Ahmed, police and military assets would be under one command. In the longer term, this command would recruit and train its own forces. Currently, he noted, the UAE has 1,600 people on the ground protecting key facilities. He confirmed that his responsibility and authority extend to both onshore and offshore facilities.

¶3. (S) Sheikh Ahmed said that he was currently surveying Abu Dhabi's critical infrastructure security requirements and that he would be preparing a report to Abu Dhabi Crown Prince/Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (MbZ) detailing his proposals by early April. He emphasized that he already had authority to procure "the best" hardware. Physical barriers would be obtained from the same U.S. company that designed the border wall with Saudi Arabia. Sheikh Ahmed said that he reported directly to MbZ, who was "his commander". Sheikh Ahmed also noted that the UAE had made significant progress in protecting its critical infrastructure, but that further progress was still needed.

¶4. (S) Dr. Averill briefly explained the USG's interest in protecting critical energy infrastructure and in working with

partners such as the UAE. He proposed that the USG send a team of experts to look at key UAE facilities and to make specific recommendations on ways for the UAE to improve its critical infrastructure protection. Dr. Averill explained that the USG had developed a great deal of practical experience in protecting critical infrastructure. Ambassador noted that this subject would be on the agenda for the upcoming May 7 Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) in Washington and that it would be useful if the team's visit could take place before the GSD meeting. Averill stressed that Sheikh Ahmed might also want to refer to this visit in preparing his report to MbZ. Sheikh Ahmed agreed in principle to the proposal, but he asked for a formal letter from the USG explaining what the U.S. was offering in terms of assistance.

(Note: A proposed draft letter has been sent back via e-mail to S/CT, NEA/ARP, and NSC. End Note.)

15. (S) This message has been cleared by Dr. Averill.
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